

Ex Parte)
)
Ernest Lopez)

Affidavit of Lorrie Word

Before me personally appeared Lorrie Word, who, after being by me duly sworn, stated the following under oath:

1. My name is Lorrie Word. My address is [REDACTED] Dumas, Texas 79029. I am over the age of 21, and am competent to make this affidavit. The statements contained herein are true and correct, and I am willing to swear to them in a court of law.
2. I worked for Veronica Vas as a nanny from approximately August 1999 until late July or early August 2000. Initially, I looked after Alex, who was two, and Emily, who was nearly one. Before working for Veronica, I worked as a daycare worker at the Hagy Learning Center, where Alex and Emily were in daycare.
3. For the first month or two after I moved in, it was pleasant working for Veronica. I only had two children to care for, and Alex and Emily spent quite a bit of time with their father, Doug Shelton, and his wife, Barbi.
4. After that, Veronica became increasingly difficult to work for. I did not have regular days or hours off, and Veronica became very demanding. Essentially, I did all of the childcare when Alex and Emily were not with their father. I was not responsible for housekeeping unless Veronica specifically asked me to help with the cleaning, in which case she paid me extra. This didn't happen very often.
5. When Veronica was pregnant with Isis, she smoked heavily (often 2-3 packs a day). She also drank heavily and took mood elevators. Sometimes she went in the garage and smoked and drank for hours. Another time, she sat at the kitchen table with a friend and drank Jose Cuevo tequila straight from the bottle. After drinking from the bottle, she poured some more in a glass and drank it. I don't remember the name of the friend but I remember that it was one of Veronica's patients because of a remark that Veronica made to her. I would probably remember the name of the patient if I saw it.
6. It bothered me when Veronica drank when she was pregnant because I knew that you aren't supposed to drink when pregnant. When I said something to Veronica about her drinking, she just rolled her eyes. Since she was an ob/gyn, it wasn't possible to argue with her. Veronica also told me that when she first found out she was pregnant with Isis, she took birth control pills to try to abort her, but it didn't work.
7. When Isis was born, I went with Veronica to the hospital. We went to Baptist St. Anthony's because Veronica didn't want to deliver at Northwest Texas Hospital,

where she worked. She said that she didn't want the doctors there to know she was giving birth. At the hospital, they gave Veronica an I.V., and we left the hospital with her friend, Mary Ann Franken, who is also an ob/gyn. We went to the house where we drank a bottle or two of wine, and then went to Victoria's Secret before going back to the hospital. I was with Veronica during the birth. After Isis was born, she didn't cry for a long time, and I always thought she was drunk.

8. When Isis was born, she was very small, and she and Veronica stayed in the hospital for a couple days. When they were released, Veronica and I brought Isis home. Veronica immediately left the house without telling me where she was going. I was scared because I didn't know how to look after a newborn, and I called my mother for advice. Veronica didn't come back for about five hours.
9. Shortly after Isis was born, I moved into Veronica's house, and I worked virtually all the time. Veronica was finishing her residency and worked more or less regular hours. When she finished work, she would come home for an hour or so and then go out again. She spent very little time with the children. I worked both during the week and on the weekends. I generally gave the children all three meals, as well as their baths, and put them to bed.
10. At first, Veronica usually makes a great first impression on people. However, many of her behaviors are strange. At first, I thought it was because she was a doctor and therefore behaved differently. Later, I became concerned for the children's wellbeing.
11. From the beginning, I noticed that Veronica did not buy the children clothes, so I bought them clothes out of my own money. Veronica also often became angry or upset. If she was angry, she either wouldn't speak to me or would slam cupboard doors or slam things on counters. I called these meltdowns. They were almost like tantrums. Other times she locked herself in the garage, smoked cigarettes, and drank.
12. Veronica's house was always messy and dirty, with spiders, roaches and other insects. Veronica wouldn't let me kill flies in the house. She believed that they might be reincarnations of her mother since she said that a fly had buzzed around during her mother's funeral. Since we couldn't kill them, there were a lot of flies in the house. I killed the spiders and roaches as best I could.
13. From the time I first met with her outside Hagy daycare center, Veronica was obsessed with a former boyfriend, Steve. Veronica said that Steve lived in Michigan and had a new girlfriend. She said that he was her true love, and she talked about him all the time. Her face lit up when she talked about him. She said that she loved him, that she wanted to get him back, and that she would do anything to be with him. Veronica talked to Steve on the telephone on and off the

entire time that I was with her. I eventually became very tired of hearing about him.

14. Veronica also talked a lot about getting out of her Navy commitment. However, she was worried that she might have to pay back the money for her education. I think she said she might have to pay back \$100,000 or so. She was always trying to figure out ways to get out of the Navy without paying back the money. However, this didn't seem to work out, and she was supposed to be moving to San Antonio to work for the Navy when I left in about July 2000.
15. Before I stopped working for Veronica, my boyfriend and I went to San Antonio with her, and it was my understanding that she had bought one of the houses that we had seen. When we went to San Antonio, Veronica was not supposed to fly because her pregnancy was too far along and it could be a risk to the airline as well as the baby. I think that Veronica made up a doctor's note so that she could fly. She had Braxton-Hicks contractions the entire time we were in San Antonio. We went and saw a movie while we were there (Erin Brochovich), and her contractions were close and intense. Justin, my boyfriend, asked her several times if she was ok and if she needed to go to the hospital but she insisted that she was ok. We both thought, "well, she is a doctor so she must know what she is doing."
16. Veronica often blamed people for things that were not their fault. For example, Dr. Shelton wanted Veronica to use a white cream for the childrens' diaper rash. Veronica refused to let me use it because she said the kids would squirt it on the furniture. She then blamed the diaper rashes on me. One morning when I got there, Alex had squirted an entire tube of A&D ointment in her hair while she slept on the couch. It was everywhere and very difficult to get out.
17. She also tried to blame things on Barbi Shelton. For example, Alex had a little scratch on his stomach one day. Veronica called me over and said something like, "doesn't that look like a burn?" She said that she thought Barbi had burned him. I said that it looked like a little scratch. She also went to the Sheltons to go through their trash to see if she could find anything to use against Barbi. She was very jealous of Barbi.
18. After Veronica behaved badly towards me, especially in front of other people, she would buy me things, such as a cell phone, or pay for my car expenses. However, she often didn't do what she said she would do. For example, she said she would give me vacation pay at Christmas. However, she didn't give me a vacation or vacation pay. She also said she was paying IRS for my social security and income taxes and that she had taken care of a traffic ticket for me. I later learned that she had not done any of these things.
19. She was also unreliable about telling me where she was. I tried not to call her very often when she was at work. However, sometimes I needed to reach her at work if, for example, one of the children was sick. When I would call her work,

they would sometimes tell me that she wasn't on duty that day. Over time, I learned not to rely on her. I was told by Veronica not to call Doug Shelton for anything even if I could not get in touch with her.

20. When she was home, Veronica did not help with the childcare or discipline the children, even if I was supposed to be off duty. Even though all three children were in diapers, I do not recall Veronica ever changing a diaper. Apart from breastfeeding Isis, she did not feed the children when I was at the house, which was almost all the time.
21. Veronica also undermined me with the children. When Alex and Emily were with me, they were generally well-behaved, and they would do as I asked. When Veronica was home, however, she would let them do whatever they wanted. For example, if Veronica was home, they would take food out of the refrigerator, and smear ketchup, meat and other food all over the house. Once, when Alex had a dirty diaper, he smeared the feces on the wall. Veronica did not see anything wrong with any of this. She let them do it, and expected me to clean up. If I didn't clean up, she would leave the food and feces on the furniture and walls.
22. Alex was very active and sometimes a little rough. When Isis was little, he got her out of her crib and carried her around. I was very concerned and tried to make sure this didn't happen again. Alex also hit me in the face with a stick horse he had gotten for Christmas when I was brushing Emily's hair. He was trying to protect Emily. He was fairly strong and could be aggressive.
23. When I was alone with the children, their behavior was not a problem. However, it became a problem if Veronica was home because she wouldn't set rules for the children or support me when I tried to do so.
24. Veronica also slept a lot. When she slept, she left the children unsupervised, and they would run wild. As a result, I didn't feel that I could leave them with her for very long. Before Isis was born, I looked after Alex and Emily virtually all the time when they were not with the Sheltons. I had my own apartment, and I would come to the house at around 6 a.m. and leave after the children were in bed, often around 10 p.m. After Isis was born and I moved in with Veronica, I did virtually all of the childcare for all three children. If I needed a weekend off, Veronica would find other babysitters.
25. In the time that I was with her, Veronica was very interested in sex and talked about it a lot. She had an ongoing affair with Dr. Bobby Miller, Isis' father. One day a friend and I came home and found Veronica watching a pornographic movie in the living room. We were embarrassed and left quietly. I don't remember who had the children.
26. A few months after Isis was born, a woman came to the house to do an evaluation. Veronica and Dr. Shelton were arguing over custody and visitation since Veronica

was supposed to be going to San Antonio to work for the Navy. Veronica knew ahead of time that the woman was coming to the house, so she cleaned the house and had me help her. Generally, the house was filthy, with spiders and insects. After the clean-up, it was the cleanest and neatest it had been in the time I knew Veronica, though it still wasn't very clean by most people's standards. Later, Veronica received a report in which the woman described the house as really messy. Veronica was furious. She made many copies of the report and showed them to everyone she could think of. I thought the woman's description of the house was right and that it was lucky the woman hadn't seen it before the cleanup.

27. When I was at Veronica's, her father, Charles Vas, came to visit three or four times, for a week or so at a time. He was quiet but it was very uncomfortable having him in the house. He was always irritable or angry, and he didn't interact with me or the children. The children didn't like being around him, and he didn't seem to like to be around the children. My friends wouldn't come over when he was there because they said it felt "creepy." Mr. Vas didn't seem to have a close relationship with Veronica, either.
28. Mr. Vas didn't have any patience with the children and didn't seem to understand their needs. For example, on one of his visits, I was getting Alex and Emily bathed and ready to go to the Sheltons since Veronica always wanted me to clean them up before the Sheltons came. Because I was hurrying to get Alex and Emily ready, I couldn't look after Isis, who was less than three months old. Mr. Vas didn't help. When I handed Alex and Emily over to the Sheltons on the front porch, I started to go to get Isis, who was crying. By then, she was probably wet and hungry. Mr. Vas put himself between me and Isis and ordered me to leave her alone and let her cry. He wouldn't let me pick her up. I was upset for Isis and also embarrassed since I think the Sheltons could overhear this.
29. Because of the way Mr. Vas treated the children, I tried to take the children out of the house whenever he was visiting Veronica. If he was there when the Sheltons had Alex and Emily and I was supposed to have time off, I took Isis with me. I did not feel comfortable leaving the children, particularly Isis, with him.
30. When I was at Veronica's, Veronica had a baby shower for another doctor. Lots of the residents or their wives came to the shower. This may have been another time that Veronica paid me to help clean the house. At the party, Veronica served alcoholic strawberry daiquiris. Alex and Emily got hold of the daiquiris and started drinking them. I think that Alex was just about three at the time, and Emily was about a year and a half. I took the daiquiris away from the children, but Veronica gave them back. She thought it was funny to see them drinking. I think that some of the doctors at the party were uncomfortable with having the children drink, but they didn't say anything. I was angry and took pictures, but Veronica later tore up the pictures.

31. In July, an incident occurred that made me feel that I couldn't live at Veronica's any longer. I had asked for a Wednesday evening off because I was meeting friends in Dumas and expected to be home late. The Sheltons were picking up Alex and Emily at six, and I expected to leave soon after that. When I was getting ready to leave, Veronica said that she had to go into work because she had to take blood draws on a pregnant woman every hour for many hours. I think she was supposed to be gone for a full shift, and that the tests had something to do with bone density. I asked her who was going to take care of Isis, who was two or two and half months old at the time. Veronica said that she was taking Isis with her and that the nurses at Northwest Texas had agreed to look after Isis when Veronica was taking the blood draws. I left a little after the Sheltons picked up Alex and Emily, and I understood that Veronica would be leaving shortly after that.
32. When I got home from Dumas at about 2 A.M., Veronica's car was gone, so I assumed she was still at work. When I went in the house through the back door, I saw Isis' diaper bag on the table. It looked as if it was still full and ready to go out. That struck me as odd since Veronica would need the diaper bag to look after Isis. When I turned the corner to the living room, I saw Isis' carseat on the floor across the room. That was odd, too, since she couldn't take Isis to the hospital without the carseat. I thought that perhaps Veronica had gotten a ride home, so I called to see if she was home. There was no answer, and there didn't seem to be anyone home, so I sat down on the couch to relax for a few minutes before going to bed.
33. When I went in the living room, I had seen a bundle of blankets wadded up on the daybed. That wasn't unusual, and I didn't think much about it. However, when I sat on the couch, the blankets moved. At first I was scared because I thought I was the only one home. Then I thought that my cat must have gotten tangled in the blankets and couldn't get out, so I went to get him out.
34. When I started to untangle the blankets, I saw Isis in the wad of blankets. Isis was soaked with urine – her diaper was soaked, her clothes were soaked, and the bedding was soaked. She had coughed up her bottle, and there were several bottles scattered around the bed. I was panic-stricken to find Isis in this condition, and I didn't know what to do. As soon as I changed Isis, I called one of my friends, Ashley Willey. I knew Ashley was still up because I had dropped her off on my way home. After that, I put a clean blanket on the bed and lay down with Isis, who went back to sleep. From the condition of Isis and the bed, as well as the diaper bag, it seemed obvious that Isis had been left alone for many hours and possibly for Veronica's entire shift.
35. About an hour later, I heard Veronica come in. By then, it was 3 A.M. Veronica came over to the bed and reached out as if she was going to grab Isis, but I threw my arm over Isis and pretended to be sleeping, so Veronica went away. I didn't say anything to her in the morning because I didn't know what to say. I felt I

should tell the Sheltons but Isis wasn't their child, and Bobby Miller wasn't interested in Isis. I also didn't want to make Veronica angry. The next day, she pretended nothing had happened, but she was uncomfortable and very short with me. I think she was mad because she realized that I knew what she had done.

36. After that, I didn't feel I could stay at Veronica's. Since Veronica had finished her residency and wasn't working very much, she was home more often, and it was difficult to look after the children. For a long time, I respected Veronica because she was a doctor and I thought she must know what she was doing. However, by this time, I couldn't deal with her behavior anymore.
37. After I left Veronica's, I still wanted to see the children, and I offered to continue to babysit them on an occasional basis. However, Veronica did not ask me to babysit. I visited Alex and Emily at the Sheltons once, for a couple of hours.
38. After I left Veronica's, two of my friends, Brandi Roberts and Ashley Willey, went to Veronica's to pick up some of my belongings for me. On the way back, they called me, upset, because they had found Alex, Emily and Isis in Veronica's van, with their cheeks flushed. It was a hot summer day, and they thought it was dangerous. They said that Veronica was in the house laughing, and that the kids were still in the car when they left. I believe they said that Veronica needed a jump start from them because the battery on her van had gone dead because the kids were watching the movie. I also believe they said that Veronica told them she left the kids in the car so they would be contained while she took a nap. Since there was a tv and vcr in the house, I assume this meant that they were belted into their carseats so they couldn't get out.
39. After this, I was worried about the children's safety, and I decided that the best thing to do was to tell the Sheltons. Since Doug Shelton was a doctor, I thought that he would know what to do. When I visited the children at the Sheltons, I told the Sheltons about Isis being left alone, the children being left in the van, and some of Veronica's behaviors. My friend Brandi Roberts took me to the Sheltons because I was nervous and felt bad because I thought I should have said something to them sooner.
40. Sometime after that, Doug Shelton's attorney took my deposition. I didn't know what a deposition was, and I was scared to death. I was nineteen and in a room with lawyers and doctors. No one told me before the deposition what to expect, and I didn't know what to say or do. I didn't want Veronica to be mad with me because I was afraid she wouldn't let me see Isis.
41. I tried to answer the questions as best I could but I also tried not to say any more than I had to say. Sometimes I didn't understand the questions because the lawyers were talking quickly and sometimes seemed to be angry with me. Veronica looked angry, too.

42. I have since re-read my deposition. Most of it is correct, but there are a few places in which I was confused and several places in which I gave partial answers because I was trying not to damage my relationship with Veronica so much that she wouldn't let me see Isis. Sometimes I didn't know what time period they were talking about. For example, when I said that Veronica drank mostly wine, I was talking about the period after Isis was born. When she was pregnant with Isis, Veronica drank hard liquor. I saw my deposition after Isis died, when I stayed with the Sheltons for about a week. However, I was not in my right mind given what had just happened, and I couldn't face reading it. I therefore didn't have an opportunity to correct it.
43. In the deposition, I said that Bobby Miller, Isis' father, didn't come to the house after Isis was born. I don't think I understood the question. Before Isis was born, Bobby Miller came to the house regularly to have sex with Veronica. He was always drunk when he came, and I would leave as soon as I saw him coming. I could see him drinking in the car as he pulled up. Veronica and Bobby Miller were not very private, and one time I walked in on them having sex in the living room. After that, I made sure that I was out when he came over.
44. After Isis was born, Veronica told me one time that Bobby Miller was coming over. She said that he thought Isis wasn't there, and she wanted me to hide Isis in a back room where he couldn't see her. I told her that Isis wasn't a dog that you put away in a back room, and that she was Bobby Miller's daughter. I was angry that Veronica wanted to have sex with someone who didn't care about his own daughter. I refused to participate, so I took Isis out with me. I saw Bobby Miller drinking in the backyard when I left. I didn't see Bobby Miller after that.
45. When Mr. Needham asked questions, they were often long and hard to follow, and it felt intimidating. No one was representing me, and Mr. Needham and Veronica were glaring at me when Ms. Emerson asked me questions. By the time Mr. Needham asked me if Veronica was a good mother and if she treated the children the same, I just wanted to get out of the deposition. It is fair to say that Veronica interacted warmly with Alex and Emily when she was there. She didn't get angry with them, and they liked her because she let them do whatever they wanted. Veronica also made sure that Alex and Emily weren't injured. She didn't, however, spend much time with any of the children. At first, Veronica breastfed Isis. Later, Isis didn't want to go to Veronica because she didn't really know her.
46. Looking back, I think that Veronica was careful about Alex and Emily because she knew that Dr. Shelton was looking out for them and he was paying her quite a bit of child support. Sometimes Veronica seemed to be having financial problems but other times she spent a lot of money. For example, she bought an antique bedroom set that she said cost \$10,000. She said she was going to give it to Emily when she got older. Other than the bedroom set, I don't recall Veronica ever buying anything for the children.

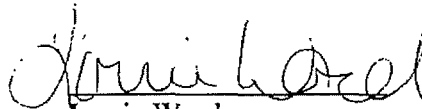
47. At the time of the deposition, I thought that Veronica loved her children but that she wasn't responsible in looking after them. Veronica talked about a sister who was mentally ill and was in and out of mental institutions. By the time I left, I wondered if Veronica might also be mentally ill. She still made a great first impression, but when you got to know her you realized that something was "off." She slept a lot, drank a lot and took a lot of medications, so you never knew what she would be like on any day. She could be generous or she could be mean. However, I never saw her behaving meanly to the children. Instead, if she was upset, she would slam doors and take it out on me, or she would smoke and drink in the garage.
48. At the time of the deposition, I was young and did not have children of my own. Now that I have three children, I can see that Veronica's behavior was not what one would expect of a mother. Veronica always seemed to care more about herself and her love affairs or sex life than about her children. I have often wondered whether I could have saved Isis' life if I had reported Veronica's behavior to DPRS. However, given what happened after Isis' death when I did report it to the investigators and the district attorney's office, I don't think it would have made any difference.
49. Veronica and her attorney, Danny Needham, followed me when I left the deposition. They backed me into a supply room until I was up against the wall, and they had their faces less than a foot from my face. Mr. Needham's face was directly in my face, and Veronica was to the side. They were both very angry, and they wanted me to change my testimony about Isis having been left alone. I was scared and crying, but I refused to change my testimony because it was truthful. I didn't think lawyers could do this.
50. I later heard that Veronica has said that she only left Isis for ten minutes and that she left because she heard a child crying in the neighborhood. In all the time that I was at Veronica's, I never heard children crying. In any event, I know that Veronica was gone for at least an hour because I was very upset and was watching the time, waiting for her to come back. Also, no baby could have gotten into Isis' condition in ten minutes, or even an hour or so. Based on the diaper bag and the condition of the bed, I think that Isis was probably alone for Veronica's entire shift, though Veronica may have come home to stick bottles in her mouth.
51. I visited Isis a few weeks after the deposition, but Veronica was still angry and I didn't stay long. Brandi Roberts went with me. When we arrived, Isis was in her car seat. When I picked her up, she was very sweaty and damp, as if she had been sitting there for quite awhile. She smiled at me as if she remembered me, but she seemed to have lost weight. Isis was thin when she was little but had started to chunk up before I left. However, Isis never had rolls or folds like most babies. For example, when my son was five months old, he looked small in his clothes but when you took his clothes off, he had rolls on his legs. Isis never had rolls.

52. After I heard that Isis had died, Barbi Shelton took me to the police station so I could tell them what I had told the Sheltons. I was nervous because the person I spoke to said he was a homicide investigator, and I had never been involved in anything like that. I told him about Veronica leaving Isis alone at night and about Veronica's behavior. I thought that he was listening to what I said, and I think he wrote up some of it. I don't remember if I signed anything.
53. Within a few months after Isis died, I saw Veronica in Dumas. She was in a convenience store near the hospital, talking and laughing and waving around what appeared to be a large diamond engagement ring. I could hardly believe that she was so happy when I still felt so badly about Isis.
54. I spoke to the district attorney's office at least twice. Both times they asked me to come to the office. On one visit, I spoke to two men. One just listened, the other shouted and pounded the table. I told them about Veronica leaving Isis alone, about Veronica giving daiquiris to Alex and Emily, and about Veronica's dad's behavior. The man who was shouting would ask me questions like, "did anyone else see it?" or "do you have proof?" No matter what I said, he said that it was hearsay. They weren't interested in anything about Veronica's dad because they said I didn't have any solid proof or evidence.
55. I especially remember the one man yelling about hearsay because when he said it, he pounded on the desk and leaned forward, almost in my face. I finally got angry and said that I was just telling him what I saw and that I couldn't see how that could be hearsay. I also tried to tell him about other people who had seen some of this, but he didn't want any of this information. He said that they couldn't consider it because I didn't have pictures and hadn't kept a journal.
56. On one of the visits, I was at the D.A.'s office for about an hour. The other one may have been shorter. On one of the visits, I finally told them that I thought they just found it a lot easier to convict a Hispanic babysitter than a white doctor. One of the men told me that it was 100% certain that Ernie was guilty, that he had already confessed, and that they had absolute evidence he did it. They said he was going to do a plea bargain.
57. In April 2002, I delivered my daughter Madison at Northwest Texas Hospital. I had some problems with the pregnancy and was in the hospital for a couple days before Madison was born. Late at night, when I was in labor, Dr. Cameron Powell, one of the doctors, came in and asked if I had been Veronica Vas' nanny. When I said I was, he started asking me questions about Veronica and the children. He then said something like, "So what we're thinking is true, eh?" I understood him to mean that some of the doctors thought Veronica was involved in or in some way responsible for Isis' death. It was very uncomfortable for me at Northwest Texas since a lot of the doctors seemed to dislike Veronica and some

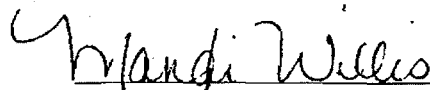
of them, including the doctor who delivered Madison, also seemed to dislike me because of my association with Veronica.

58. I have always hoped that someone would do a proper investigation into Isis' death. I understand that there are many legal rules about evidence that I don't understand, but it still seems that there must be some way for someone to look at what happened to Isis in her entire life, not just when the last babysitters had her. When I talked to the district attorney's office, it seemed like they were more interested in protecting Veronica and blaming Ernie Lopez than in figuring out what happened to Isis.

This completes my affidavit.


Lorrie Word

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME THIS 25 DAY OF April, 2006.


Mandi Willis
Notary Public in and for the
State of Texas

My commission expires: 1-10-2009

